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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the actions of several state reform programs and examines the methods by which they funded or failed to fund their educational reform programs. Results of reform in seven states--California, New York, Texas, Wisconsin, Florida, Tennessee, and South Carolina--are highlighted. Fiscal and political issues are also identified. Data were derived from an unpublished nationwide survey of 51 chief state school officers, summaries of actions by state legislatures, state departments of education, and other studies. A conclusion is that although state responsibility for school funding increased during the 1980s, the enormous amount of money generated for educational reform programs failed to produce comprehensive programs. This disparity was due to leadership within the state. The survey of school officers indicated a lack of clear definitions of educational reform and leadership responsibility. Fifty-nine notes are attached. (LMI)

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State Reform: Separating Perception from Reality

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INTRODUCTION

The most significant development in state finances for public elementary and secondary schools since the 1970's has been the increase in state responsibility for financing public schools. In most cases, these increases in state funding of school costs have been widely accepted, but some of the effects are being felt in the local school districts as governors and legislators have used the increases as vehicles to develop, in many cases, state reform of education programs. The rapid growth of state aid can be viewed from several perspectives. In this paper the actions of several state reform programs will be reviewed, and the methods by which various states funded or failed to fund their educational reform programs will be determined. In addition, some of the fiscal and political issues which emerged from these reform movements will be noted.

JUSTIFICATION FOR STUDY

Efforts to define the term educational reform have been unsatisfactory. What is viewed as educational reform in one state may be considered a trend or common practice in other states. In order to avoid confusion or controversy, educational reform in this paper will mean reform which is being funded specifically by monies allocated for this purpose as specified by the state involved.

The fiscal year 1979-80 was a significant one in the

financing of public elementary and secondary schools. According to Charles S. Benson, "State government for the first time became the primary supplier of revenue to support and maintain public elementary and secondary education."[1] For the first time in the nation's history, state government replaced the local school districts as the primary provider of funds for public schools. Benson cited 50.2 billion dollars as the sum spent by state government, or 21% of the revenue from state coffers.[2]

This shifting of the burden of cost from local school districts to state government has been one of the major factors in the reform impetus. The cost of education reform can be described only by an analysis of the relationship between actual dollar cost of specific education reform and the actual dollars appropriated for those reforms.[3] This provides evidence for a more realistic assessment of the reality of change brought about by education financial reform.

When a call for education reform during the 1970's was made, the primary goal was to provide an equal school finance program for public elementary and secondary students. Of major interest were the initiators of such calls to attempt to achieve fiscal equity and the methods used to fund public schools in this effort. By the end of the 1970's, however, the equity factor was no longer the primary issue in calls for education reform.

With the publication of A Nation at Risk, a new focus in education reform was generated. The crisis in American education as described in this revealing publication could be resolved only through drastic changes, which would result in excellence in education. This pursuit of excellence gave rise to the Program of Excellence which initiated the reform movement of the 1980's.

This movement, as characterized by Elmore and Mc Laughlin (1988), had four salient features. With the secondary school as the major target, the significant implements of reform were standards setting and regulation. Most policy making, which occurred at the state or local level, reflected the pursuit of quality, the dominant theme of education reform.[4] Noting the implications of the movement for future actions, Mc Guire (1986) observed:

> 'The education reform movement has stimulated the participation of new participants in the educational policy making process, garnered support for tax increases to fund new programs, and raised public expectations for measuring improvement in student achievement. The specific impact of reform on school districts, teachers and students cannot be determined at this time.'[5]

A primary reason that the impact of the reform movement of the 1980's cannot be determined is the disparity among the states in their perception of education reform. Vast differences exist, in part perhaps because of the number of involved participants. Legislators, governors, state departments, citizens of education are all involved in some aspects in seeking ways for education to improve in the

areas of student performance, testing and curriculum development, to name a few. Reformers have many concerns but often the total education environment is not considered There seems to be no order to achieve excellence. Little effort has been directed at the initiators of reform activities or leadership roles as the movement impacts the states.

Yet much funding already has been earmarked for education reform. In an unpublished study for the Education Commission of the States, Dougherty (1986) compiled fiscal data on reform activities from 47 states and classified the distribution of these funds into five major categories teacher incentive programs, graduation requirements, curriculum and instructional programs, student testing, and school/classroom structure.[6] In 1985-86 he reported that 800 million dollars or 40% of all the reform funds went into the teacher incentive category. Furthermore, 90% of the teacher initiative was targeted for teacher compensation. Graduation requirements were raised in 41 states, but only two states provided funds to accomplish this mandate. There was an appropriation of nine million dollars or a 0.7% increase in funding for this category. Curriculum and instructional programs received over 550 million or about 27% of state reform dollars. In terms of target groups 13 states allocated 67.3 million dollars to serve "at risk students." Student testing received 72 million dollars or

less than 4 percent of the total. School/classroom structures received about 28% or 550 million of the 1985-866 state reform dollars.[7]

Although determining common major categories for reform activities, Dougherty's findings indicate a disparity in the priorities among the various states for spending reform monies. Indeed, according to an analysis by Odden (1985), there also existed a disparity between the allocation of funds for reforms and the actual cost of specific education reforms. In his estimate the reform based on expenditures for 1984 was 20 to 25% of the current expenditures. Using 1984 as the base year, an extra 25 billion would be needed to finance the enacted reforms; only 3.4 billion dollars in real resources were appropriated. Extra appropriations in eight states were far short of the required 20%. South Carolina was the only state to increase funding beyond the necessary level.[8]

Many reform states have failed to fund fully many of their reform elements. Funding for teachers' salary increases would require an extra ten billion dollars nationally. To date this has not been provided by the states. If one were to identify the most seriously underfunded program it would be the program of excellence which has been widely adopted by many states.[9]

Another attempt to analyze the various state reform programs and their funding as well as the participants who

generated these programs resulted in a survey conducted in 1989 by Flanigan, Richardson, Cline and Shrader of Western Kentucky University. Each chief state school officer in all 50 states and the District of Columbia responded to questions designed to provide information about those in the state who initiated reform packages, efforts to spend the money allocated, and the effects of the major pieces of legislation on the financial resources available to the various local school districts. The data compiled from this unpublished survey revealed the need to take a closer look at the reality of the education reform programs and how they are actually perceived, not only by the chief state officers but also by all involved in education. A review of some of the major studies and an analysis of available data may help to determine why such disparities exist.

FINDINGS OF SELECTED STATES WITH EDUCATION REFORM PROGRAMS

Once the concept of education reform began to be accepted, the states eagerly became a part of the movement; in fact, education reform programs were so quickly developed and passed that the movement assumed the characteristics of an epidemic. According to Odden, in 1983 and 1984 alone, the states created or appointed 300 task forces with the direct charge to develop educational reform proposals.[10] Passing legislation which created broad and comprehensive education packages, the majority of states labeled their

changes in education as reform. Of course, these actions necessitated greater expenses which the states were expected to assume.

Because it would be impossible, and unnecessary, to report all the results for all states studied, only the results of the reform programs of seven major reform states will be reviewed here. This selection includes California, New York, Texas, Wisconsin, Florida, Tennessee, and South Carolina. The basis for inclusion was the following criteria: size of state, geographic location, and available and similar data. Included in this section are data from the survey conducted by Flanigan et al., summaries of actions by state legislatures, selected material obtained from state departments of education, and other studies. Pertinent information from periodicals and the study of the Education Commission of the States will also be used.

In attempting to determine the perception of education reform compared with the reality of such, the authors have used perceived as well as actual costs and have reported these in dollars and programs. To help accomplish this, data about particular programs, identification of those assuming the leadership role in such programs, and major consistencies and inconsistencies in each state's reform programs will be emphasized.

The state of California became involved in the education reform movement in 1983 with the passage of the

Hughes Hart Educational Reform Act, a comprehensive (214 pages) school reform and finance bill which provided approximately 900 million dollars in new funding for the state's public elementary and secondary schools.[11] The leadership role was assumed by the chief state school officer Bill Honig, who led the statewide effort to pass this legislation.[12] The financial provisions of the Hughes Hart legislation were broad and encompassing. The bill, which addressed twenty-two areas of finance in the state's public and elementary schools, in particular made provisions for supplemental funding for small school districts and minimal teachers' salaries. Provisions were also made for state funding for additional monies to increase by 10 percent annually for the next three years (1983-1986) the lowest salary on the schedule applicable to certified teachers up to a maximum salary of $18,000 or to increase by the average percent provided for revenue limits of unified school districts.[13] In order to receive state funds the districts had to certify the increases specified did not necessitate an increase in salaries of other higher paid teachers.

By 1984-85 the legislation had produced an additional 1.2 billion dollars for the public schools in California.[14] The teachers' average salary was $24,843 and in 1983-84 but had increased to $26,300 by 1984-85, a 6% increase.[15] On the other hand, the average per pupil expenditure which was

$2,832 in 1983-84 increased to $3,126 (estimated), or 10%, in 1984-85.[16]

In addition, the Hughes Hart Educational Reform Act funded a statewide Program of Excellence by allocating $106 dollars per public school student.[17]

Prior to the 1983 publication of A Nation at Risk, the New York State Board of Regents had begun to evaluate its educational system. The Board initiated a series of deliberations regarding how the standards of excellence could be raised in the state. What resulted was a proposal, the Regents Action Plan, which delineated recommended schedules for the implementation of the necessary changes and described the goals and philosophy of the Regents which led to the recommended changes.[18]

In November 1984 the new Part 100 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education of New York was adopted.[19] In addition, a request for a 634 million dollar increase in state aid to the public schools for the 1985-86 school year was made.[20] The significance of this development of an educational reform package was the State Board of Regents, an independent government body, developed and implemented this plan, not by statute, as in most other states, but by educational policy-making and the Commissioner's Regulations.[21]

In the 1985-86 school year, reform funding in New York totalled 146.5 million dollars of the state budgeted 6.6

billion dollars for public elementary and secondary education.[22] The largest portion allocated was a 96.5 million dollar discretionary grant to increase the salaries of those teachers in grades 1-3 whose salaries were below the state average.[23] The average salary for a teacher in 1983-84 was $27,319, increasing to $30,490 in 1985-86, or 9% increase over a two-year period. The average per pupil expenditure in 1983-84 was $5,117 increasing to $5,492 in 1984-85, or a 0.93% increase.[24]

The education reform program instituted in Texas in 1984 had several unique characteristics compared with those in California and New York. Its reform program, carried out without the involvement of the chief school officer, resulted from a resolution adopted by the legislature in 1983 which called for a comprehensive study of the state's public education system.[25]

A select committee on public education appointed by Governor Mark White chose the following components to be considered: more accountability including student and teacher testing, opportunities for teachers to earn more based on performance, higher standards and an increased emphasis on academic rather than extracurricular activities.[26]

Supported by leading businessmen, the billion dollar education reform was financed by increases in state sales tax and other general taxes. The major provision of the

legislation was additional funds more equitably distributed. The state funding system was revised to distribute more state funds to property-poor school districts and to provide for better equity among school districts across the state.[27]

One of the provisions of the reform package was an across-the-board pay raise for teachers, including raising the minimum beginning annual salary for a first-year teacher from $11,000 to $15,200.[28] A classroom teacher with a master's degree at the highest step of the pay scale earned a minimum of $25,460.[29] Overall, teacher salaries in Texas increased after the enactment of the reform legislation. In 1983-84, the average salary of a teacher was $17,910 increasing to $20,080 in 1984-85, or a 12% increase.[30]

A major provision enacted was a school finance formula which changed from a personnel-based state school aid formula to a pupil-based formula. The weighted student approach was used to provide funds for special students. Allowances were included to recognize differences in the cost of providing education services and the additional cost associated with the operations of small schools.[31]

Excluding the change in the distribution formula for state funds, Texas allocated about 10 percent of state funds for its education reform program. For 1987 the Texas legislation appropriated 4.4 billion dollars for public schools. Included was 400 million dollars, intended to cover career ladder programs, a pre-kindergarten program and

summer programs for local school districts.[32]

The average per pupil (ADM) expenditure in 1983-84 for students in Texas was $2,780. After the enactment of the reform legislation the ADM increased to $2,978 during 1984-85, or a total increase of 7% increase for student expenditures.[33]

Wisconsin, a state which has long assumed a strong leadership role in education before the national reform movement began, continued its thrust for excellence by basing its educational reform on the state's 20 educational standards, one-half enacted in 1973 and the other half in 1985. These educational standards are a comprehensive and integrated set of requirements that illustrate the state's intent to guarantee every student equal access to quality education.[34] Since many educators argued that the standards, found in the Wisconsin Statutes, neglected essential areas and were somewhat confusing as guidelines, the legislation passed in 1983 amended state curriculum requirements and educational expectations.

In addition to the clarified new goals and expectations, the state superintendent was also given the authority to withhold state aid from any school district that did not comply with the requirements necessary to meet the established goals.[35]

In 1985-87 the present educational reform package, implemented by the legislature, was enacted. Involved in

the planning and drafting of the actual legislation was the chief school officer. In addition to the 20 standards mandated by law, the priorities of the bill included: children at risk, education for employment, the gifted and talented, teacher incentive pilot program, and administrative leadership academy.[36]

According to available data, it was not clear just where or how funding for the education reform program was generated. Some of the programs are well funded in a budget which has increased from state revenues for state aid in the amount of $1,042,513,021 during the fiscal year 1983-84 to $1,361,665,770 in state aid after the reform package for fiscal year 1986-87.[37] Resources were not available for all programs, and some were funded on a limited basis. For example, in 1987-88 new testing standards cost $17,000 to develop; in 1989-90 the costs for printing, scoring, and reporting were $102,500.[38]

To meet the standard for administrator excellence, the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) received federal Leadership in Educational Administrator Development funds for the 1987-88 school year to initiate the Administrator Leadership Academy.[39] For another program, the DPI will receive $300,000 for 1989-91 biennium and $600,000 in the second year to provide competitive grants to local school districts to develop family involvement and parent education programs.[40]

To meet another program priority, under current law school districts must file their child-at-risk plans with the state to determine whether or not they qualify for additional aid. If the district's students meet specified minimum performance levels, the district is eligible for additional state aid for pupils served in the program.[41]

Of the 5.8 million dollars the DPI requested for 1988-89 for the Early Education for the Disadvantaged, another reform priority, the budget signed by the governor allocated $38,600 to fund a position to coordinate programs within the DPI which have an early childhood emphasis. Funding for a new early education program was denied. However, there was an appropriation in the budget for 2.4 million dollars for the expansion of existing full-day kindergarten programs for 5 year-olds and $600,000 for early education contracts with day care centers. This latter allocation represented a portion of the funds the state pledged as part of the Milwaukee desegregation settlement.[42]

The average per pupil expenditure (ADM) for 1983-84 was $3,513, increasing to $3,815 in 1984-85, or a 9% increase. The average salary for a teacher was $22,811 in 1983-84, increasing to $26,347 in 1985-86 for an increase of 8.7% over a two-year period.[43]

Although Wisconsin has clearly outlined the 20 standards mandated by law to attempt to achieve excellence in its public school system and these serve as the basis of

the education reform program there, some ambiguity as to a clear definition of its meaning of education reform seems to exist. As noted by one high DPI official, education reform in Wisconsin is "a successful effort to provide quality educational opportunities for all children in Wisconsin, regardless of geographic location, while facilitating development of early childhood, gifted and talented, and special educational needs in districts throughout the state."[44] The reform program has been set in motion, but adequate funding for all standards/programs has not been allocated.

In 1984 the legislature in Florida passed its education reform package, Florida Accountability in Curriculum, Educational Materials and Test Act (FACET). The present commissioner of education Betty Castor was a member of the state senate when this multi-year phase-in (through 1989-90) legislation was inacted.[45] As the title of the legislation suggests, accountability in curriculum, educational instructional material, and testing was to be emphasized. The major priorities of the reform package included curriculum framework and graduation requirements, instructional materials, a state student assessment test, and functional literacy.

In order to fund this program, the legislature added two new taxes. In 1983 it increased the sales tax by one cent and initiated a unitary tax on corporations. Revenues

in Florida for public schools increased 400 million dollars in 1983 and another 100 million dollars by 1986.[46]

Of the new money generated for this reform, 256 million dollars between 1985-86, 203 million dollars was spent for basic school aid. Categorical funding for special programs including reform increased by 100 million dollars. Total state funding for education increased by 500 million dollars between 1984-86.[47] The total expenditures on the reform program, less state basic aid and categorical funding, would be 157 million dollars or 5% of the state school funds.[48]

With the implementation of this reform, a teacher's average salary increased from $19,497 in 1983-84 to $21,057 in 1984-85, an 8% increase for the first year. In like manner, the current expense per pupil (ADM) increased from $2,913 in 1983-84 to $3,147 in 1984-85, an 8% increase in expenditures.[49]

In Tennessee, a rapidly growing and developing state representing the southern central section of the nation, the reform movement was also being felt. Although initially stalemated in 1983, career ladder programs proposed by Tennessee's governor Lamar Alexander was included in the education reform package known as the Comprehensive Education Reform Act (CERA) in 1984. Earlier efforts in 1983 to pass the program also involved the chief state school officer.[50]

Funded by a one-cent increase in the sales tax, the

program promised to increase state aid to education by an extra 300 million dollars in 1985, 1986, and 1987.[51] Coupled with the sales tax was a business tax which enabled the state to increase revenue by 351,000 million dollars for the first year of the program.[52]

The CERA increased salaries by 30% across the board over the three-year period and included the career ladder program.[53] Also included were university centers of excellence, computer skills, math and science, and funds for textbooks, maintenance and operations. As a result of CERA, the average salary of teachers in Tennessee increased from $17,910 in 1983-84 to $20,080 in 1984-85, an 12% increase during the first year of the program. Per pupil expenditures increased from $2,030 in 1983-84 to $2,222 in 1984-85, or an overall 9% increase.[54]

One of the most comprehensive and well-funded educational reform programs was passed by the legislature in South Carolina in 1984. This massive reform program, the Education Improvement Act (EIA), which involved the chief state school officer in its drafting, was intended to strengthen teacher training, compensation and evaluation.[55] Already amended four times - 1985, 1986, 1987, and 1989, the EIA emphasized improved school leadership and management, and increased community participation. In addition to allowing school districts flexibility in adhering to state regulations such as class size, scheduling, student-teacher

ratio and curriculum, it also emphasized basic skills in teaching and testing programs.[56]

South Carolina was the only state to increase appropriations beyond 20%, exceeding any appropriations made in any of the other states with education reform packages in 1984.[57] This increase in total revenue approached the level needed to fund fully a comprehensive reform program.

Expenditures per student increased more proportionately than those allowed for the average salary of a teacher in the first year after the passage of the EIA. Current expenditures per pupil (ADM) in 1983-84 were $2,196, but increased to $2,597 in 1984 for a 20% increase. The average salary of a teacher in 1983-84 was $17,384, increasing to $19,900 in 1984-85 for a 14% increase.[58]

In 1986-87 the penny sales tax provided 240 million dollars to fund EIA programs.[59]

CONCLUSION

The 1980's have been labeled the decade of the education reform movement. Indeed, many reform packages were designed and enacted, and much revenue was appropriated for these programs. State responsibility for the funding of public elementary and secondary schools increased. However, the findings of this paper indicate in reality the enormous amount of money generated for these programs was spent on a relatively few areas.

In many states what the public perceived as education reform turned out to be increases in teachers' salaries, per pupil expenditures, and only selected areas for improvement. Seldom were comprehensive programs enacted which changed to a great extent the educational programs in these states. Often funding for such programs was not adequate to carry out the intended program.

This disparity was due, in part, to the leadership within the state. When the onus of responsibility was on political groups or individuals, then those initiating the reform packages were at the mercy of the limitations of state resources. In fact, state resources dictated the ability to fund the changes. In some instances, political groups were able to change or embellish the financial structure of the state in order to implement the proposed reform.

The unpublished survey (Flanigan et al. 1989), which served as the basis for this paper, revealed the perceptions of the chief state school officers varied. There was no clear definition of education reform in the areas of finance, teacher compensation, per pupil expenditure, and assessment of teacher and student quality and progress. There was also no clearly defined leadership responsibility in developing reform programs. Most chief state school officers were involved in some aspect of their state education reform program, but no two programs were reported

to be alike.

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